

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, XC, UR, GE, JA
SUBJ: SRV AND THE SOVIET ORBIT

REF: (A) BANGKOK 33160, (B) SINGAPORE 5473, (C) RANGOON 2391

SUMMARY: IT IS SOMETIMES ASSUMED THAT THE SRV IS NOT IN THE SOVIET ORBIT, BUT IN DANGER OF ALLING INTO IT, AND NEEDS FOREIGN (EXPECIALLY U.S.) ECONOMIC AID TO KEEP ITSELF OUT OF SOVIET CLUTCHES. THIS IS IN EFFECT CONTRADICTED BY THE GDR AMBASSADOR IN RANGOON WHO SAYS THAT THE CURRENT PRO-SOVIET ORIENTATION OF THE SRV IS SATISFACTORY TO THE

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SOVIETS; HE ALSO IMPLIES THAT THE GDR AND SOVIETS WOULD BE NOT UNHAPPY TO SEE U.S. RECOGNITION OF AND ECONOMIC AID TO THE SRV. I THINK THE U.S. SHOULD DECIDE WHTTHER AND HOW MUCH TO AID THE SRV ON THE BASIS OF GENERALLY APPLICABLE CRITERIA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE; AND WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE SRV WHENEVER IT IS WILLING TO ACCPT RECOGNITION UNCONDITIONALLY. END SUMMARY:

1. AT A RECENT CONFERENCE AT BANGKOK OF JAPANESE CHIEFS OF MISSION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND AGAININ A CONVERSATION I HAD WITH HIM HERE ON DECEMBER 9, JAPANESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KEISUKE ARITA MADE A CASE FOR PROMPT US RECOGNITION OF AND AID TO THE SRV AS A MEANS OF HELPING IT KEEP ITSELF OUT OF THE SOVIET ORBIT. THIS RATIONALE NECESSARILY IMPLIES THAT VIETNAM IS NOT NOW IN THE SOVIET ORBIT, AND THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO BRING IT INTO THEIR ORBIT. IT WOULD ALSO BE A LOGICAL INFERENCE FROM ARITA'S RATIONALE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE THE U.S. UNDERTAKE A COURSE OF ACTION (I.E., RECOGNITION AND AID) THAT WAS LIKELY TO KEEP VIETNAM OUT OF THEIR ORBIT.

2. GDR AMBASSADOR SEIGFRIED KUEHNEL , ABLEST AND MOST APPROACHABLE OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS IN RANGOON, AND A CLOSE CONFIDANT OF THE SRV'S REPRESENTATIVE, SAYS THAT WHILE THE SRV IS NOT ANTI-PRC, IT DEFINITELY PREFERENCES "OUR WAY--THE GDR AND SOVIET WAY--OF DOING THINGS" OVER THE CHINESE WAY, "WHICH WE DO NOT REGARD AS REAL SCLISM". IN SEVERAL SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS OVER A SPAN OF ABOUT A YEAR, KUEHNEL HAS MAINTAINED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST THE SPREAD OF CHINESE INFLUENCE FURTHER SOUTH INTO SEA IS A PROSPERING, SUCCEEDING, AND PEACEABLE VIETNAM, WITH A CREDIBLE DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE. ON OCCASION, KUEHNEL HAS SUGGESTED THE DESIRABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES FURTHERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH A PEACE-LOVING VIETNAM.

3. COMMENT: I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ARITA'S RATIONALE (WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND AID VIETNAM TO KEEP IT OUT OF SOVIET CLUTCHES) IS CONFIDENTIAL

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AIMED PRIMARILY AT MAKING A CASE FOR CONTINUED ACTIVE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIRS -- NOT NECESSARILY THE SECURITY AFFAIRS -- OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, RATHER THAN REPRESENTING THE CONCLUSION OF AN OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SRV-PRC-USSR RELAIONSHIP. PERSONALLY, I THINK THE JAPANESE ARE PROBABLY RIGHT TO BE UNEASY ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF TOO RAPID OR COMPLETE A DISENGAGEMENT BY THE U.S. FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL, AND PERHAPS POLITICAL MATTERS. HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE KEEP ENGAGED, IF WE DO, FOR THE RIGHT REASONS. WE SHOULD CONSIDER AIDING A PEACEABLE VIETNAM ON THE BASIS OF THE SAME SORT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTAL AND HUMANITARIAN CRITERIA APPLICABLE TO AID PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE, AND NOT WITH ANY IDEA OF PROTECTING IT FROM SOVIET INFLUENCE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE FACT THAT U.S. RECOGNITION OF THE SRV MIGHT BE REGARDED FAVORABLY THE USSR FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ITS GOAL OF "CONTAINING" CHINA SHOULD NOT DETER US FROM RECOGNIZING THE SRV, WHEN AND IT IT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT RECOGNITION UNCONDITIONALLY.

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